SERIAL STORY

THE HOUSE OF A THOUSAND CANDLES

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON

Author of "THE MAIN CHANCE," "ZELDA DAMERON," Etc.

CHAPTER I.

The Will of John Marshall Glenarm.

Pickering's letter bringing news of my grandfather's death found me at Naples early in October. John Marshall Glenarm had died in June, leaving a will which gave me his property conditionally. Pickering wrote, and it was necessary for me to return immediately to qualify as legatee. It was by the merest luck that the letter came to my hands at all, for it had been sent to Constantinople, in care of the consul-general instead of my banker there, and it was not Pickering's fault that the consul was a friend of mine who kept track of my wanderings and was able to hurry the executor's letter after me to Italy, where I had gone to meet an English financier who had, I was advised, unlimited money to spend on African railways. I am an engineer, a graduate of an American institution familiarly known as "The Tech," and as my funds were running low I naturally turned to my profession for employment.

But this letter changed my plans, and the following day I cabled Pickering of my departure and was outward bound on a steamer for New York. Fourteen days later I sat in Pickering's office in the Alexis Building and listened intently while he read, with much ponderous emphasis, the provisions of my grandfather's will. When he concluded I laughed. Pickering was a serious man, and I was glad to see that my levity pained him. I had, for that matter, always been a source of annoyance to him, and his look of distrust and rebuke did not trouble me in the least.

I reached across the table for the paper, and he gave the sealed and beribboned copy of John Marshall Glenarm's will into my hands. I read it through for myself, feeling conscious meanwhile that Pickering's cool gaze was bent inquiringly upon me. These are the paragraphs that interested me most:

"I give and devise unto my said grandson, John Glenarm, sometime a resident of the city and state of New York, and later a vagabond of parts unknown, a certain property known as Glenarm House, with the lands and hereditaments thereunto pertaining and hereinafter more particularly described, and all personal effects, goods and other property that may be located in the premises and on the land herein described,—the said realty lying in the county of Wabana in the state of Indiana,—upon this condition, faithfully and honestly performed:

"That said John Glenarm shall remain an occupant of said Glenarm House and of my lands appurtenant thereto, demeaning himself meanwhile in an orderly and temperate manner. Should he fail at any time during said year to comply with this provision, said property shall at once revert to my general estate, shall become, without reservation and without necessity for any process of law the property, absolutely, of Marian Devereux, of the county and state of New York."

"Well," he demanded, striking his hands upon the arms of his chair, "what do you think of it?"

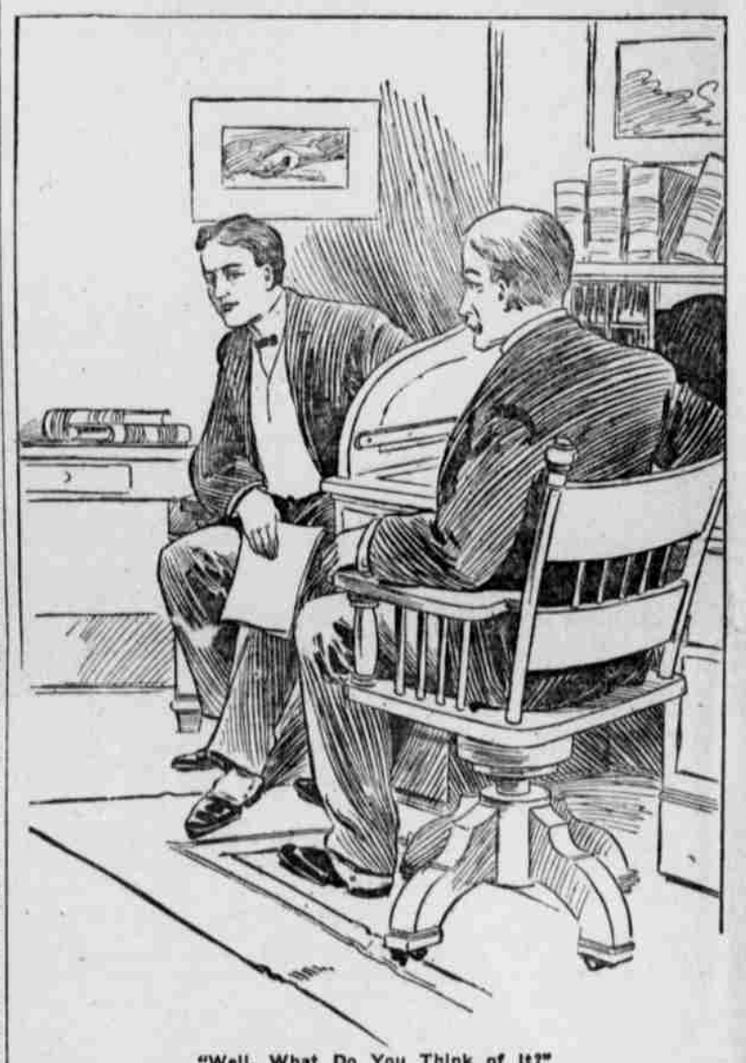
For the life of me I could not help laughing again. There was, in the first place, a delicious irony in the fact that I should learn through him of my grandfather's wishes with respect to myself. Pickering and I had grown up in the same town in Vermont; we had attended the same preparatory school, but there had been from boyhood a certain antagonism between us. He had always succeeded where I failed, which is to say, I must admit, that he had succeeded pretty frequently. When I refused to settle down to my profession, but chose to see something of the world first, Pickering gave himself seriously to the law, and there was, I knew from the beginning, no manner of chance that he would fail.

I am not more or less than human, and I remembered with joy that once I had thrashed him soundly at the prep school for bullying a smaller boy, but our score from school days was not without tallies on his side. He was easily the better scholar—I grant him that; and he was shrewd and plausible. You never quite knew the extent of his powers and resources, and he had, I always mantained, the most amazing good luck,—as witness the fact that John Marshall Glenarm had taken a friendly interest in him. It was wholly like my grandfather, who was a man of many whims, to give his affairs into Pickering's keeping; and I could not complain, for I had missed my own chance with him. It was, I knew readily enough, part of my punishment for having succeeded so signally in incurring my grandfather's displeasure that he had made it necessary for me to treat with Arthur Pickering in this matter of the will; and Pickering was enjoying the situation to the full.

But there was something not wholly honest in my mirth, for my conduct during the three preceding years had been reprehensible. I had used my grandfather shabbily. My parents died when I was a child, and he had cared for me as far back as my memory ran. He had suffered me to spend the fortune left by my father without restraint; he had expected much of me, and I had grievously disappointed him. It was his hope that I should devote myself to architecture, a profession for which he had the greatest admiration, whereas I had insisted on engineering.

I am not making an apology for my life, and I shall not attempt to extenuate my conduct in going abroad at the end of my course at Tech and, making Laurance Donovan's acquaintance, setting off with him on a career of adventure. I do not regret, though possibly it would be more to my credit if I did, the months spent in leisurely following the Danube east of the Iron Gate—Laurance Donovan always with me, while we urged the villagers and inn-loafers to all manner of sedition, acquitting ourselves so well that, when we came out into the Black sea for further pleasure, Russia did us the honor to keep a spy at our heels. I should like, for my own satisfaction, at least, to set down an account of certain affairs in which we were concerned at Belgrad, but without Larry's consent I am not at liberty to do so. Nor shall I take time here to describe our travels in Africa, though our study of the Atlas mountain dwarfs won us honorable mention by the British Ethnological Society.

These were my yesterdays; but today I sat in Arthur Pickering's office in the towering Alexis Building, conscious of the muffled roar of Broadway, discussing the terms of my grandfather Glenarm's will with a man whom I disliked as heartily as it is safe for one man to dislike another. Pickering had asked me a question, and I was suddenly aware that his eyes were fixed upon me and that he awaited my answer.



"Well, What Do You Think of It?"

"What do I think of it?" I repeated. "I don't know that it makes any difference what I think, but I'll tell you, if you want to know, that I call it infamous, outrageous, that a man should leave a ridiculous will of that sort behind him. All the old money-bags who pile up fortunes magnify the importance of their money. They imagine that every kindness, every ordinary courtesy shown them, is merely a bid for a slice of the cake. I'm disappointed in my grandfather. He was a splendid old man, though God knows he had his queer ways. I'll bet a thousand dollars, if I have so much money in the world, that this scheme is yours, Pickering, and not his. It smacks of your ancient vindictiveness, and John Marshall Glenarm had none of that in his blood. That stipulation about my residence out there is fantastic. I don't have to be a lawyer to know that; and no doubt I could break the will; I've a good notion to try it, anyhow."

"To be sure. You can tie up the estate for a half dozen years if you like," he replied coolly. He did not look upon me as likely to become a formidable litigant. My staying qualities had been proved weak long ago, as Pickering knew well enough.

"No doubt you would like that," I answered. "But I'm not going to give you the pleasure. I abide by the term of the will. My grandfather was a fine old gentleman. I shan't drag his name through the courts,—not even to please you, Arthur Pickering," I declared hotly.

"The sentiment is worthy of a good man, Glenarm," he rejoined.

"But this woman who is to succeed to my rights,—I don't seem to remember her."

"It is not surprising that you never heard of her."

"Then she's not a connection of the family,—no long-lost cousin whom I ought to remember?"

"No; she was a late acquaintance of your grandfather. He met her through an old friend of his,—Miss Evans, known as Sister Theresa. Miss Devereux is Sister Theresa's niece."

I whistled. I had a dim recollection that during my grandfather's long widowerhood there were occasional reports that he was about to marry. The name of Miss Evans had been mentioned in this connection. I had heard it spoken of in my family, and not remembered, with much kindness. Later I heard of her joining a Sisterhood, and opening a school somewhere in the West.

"And Miss Devereux,—is she an elderly nun, too?"

"I don't know how elderly she is but she isn't a nun at present. Still she's very much alone in the world and she and Sister Theresa are very intimate."

"Pass the will again, Pickering while I make sure I grasp these diverting ideas. Sister Theresa isn't the one I mustn't marry is she? It's the other ecclesiastical embroidery artist—the one with the "x" in her name suggesting the algebra of my vanishing youth."

I read aloud this paragraph:

"Provided, further, that in event said John Glenarm aforesaid shall marry the said Marian Devereux, or in the event of any promise or contract of marriage between said persons within five years from the date of said John Glenarm's acceptance of the provisions of this will, the whole estate shall become the property absolutely of St. Agatha's School, at Annandale, Wabana county, Indiana, a corporation under the laws of said state."

"For a touch of comedy commend me to my grandfather! Pickering, you always were a well-meaning fellow,—I'll turn over to you all my right, interest and title in and to these angelic Sisters. Marry! I like the idea! I suppose some one will try to marry me for my money. Marriage, Pickering, is not embraced in my scheme of life!"

"I should hardly call you a marrying man," he observed.

"Perfectly right, my friend! Sister Theresa was considered a possible match for my grandfather in my youth. I'm quite out of it with her And the other lady with the fascinating algebraic climax to her name,—she, too, impossible; it seems that I can't get the money by marrying her I'd better let her take it. She's as poor as the devil, I dare say."

"I imagine not. The Evanses are a wealthy family, in spots, and she ought to have some money of her own, if her aunt doesn't coax it out of her for educational schemes."

"And where on the map are these lovely creatures to be found?"

"Sister Theresa's school adjoins your preserve; Miss Devereux has, I think, some of your own weakness for travel. Sister Theresa is her nearest relative, and she occasionally visits St. Agatha's—that's the school."

"I suppose they embroider altar-cloths together and otherwise labor valiantly to bring confusion upon satan and his cohorts. Just the people to pull the wool over the eyes of my grandfather!"

Pickering smiled at my resentment.

"You'd better give them a wide berth; they might catch you in their net. Sister Theresa is said to have quite a winning way. She certainly plucked your grandfather."

"Nuns in spectacles, the gentle educators of youth and that sort of thing, with a good-natured old man for their prey. None of them for me!"

"I rather thought so," remarked Pickering,—and he pulled his watch from his pocket and turned the stem with his heavy fingers. He was short, thickset and sleek, with a square jaw, hair already thin and a close-clipped mustache. Age, I mentally reflected, was not improving him.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

A BIT OF LIFE

By HELEN J. CLELAND

Trinity church is ablaze with lights. The chancel is fragrant with the perfume of rare exotics. The rustle of silken gowns is heard as guests pass up the aisle. Voices are hushed and anxious looks toward the western door show the eagerness with which they await the coming of the bridal party.

One by one the carriages roll up, deposit their fair burdens and pass down the other side of the street. Outside the thick flashes of snow come down soft and fast.

A sudden little gust of wind blows a miniature avalanche around a corner, and for a moment almost blinds a swiftly passing pedestrian, who suffers accordingly from the unexpected assault by bringing his umbrella in direct collision with that of some one coming towards him.

Both hurriedly look up, and both simultaneously grasp hands and exclaim: "My dear boy!"

"'Pon my word, Geoff, where did you drop from?" gasps the younger man. "Odd thing, that, d'ye know. Bob Lathrop and I were speaking of you this morning at the club; wondered if one of your royal Bengals had taken a notion to swallow you whole. Bob said: 'No. Trust Geoff for that; nothing so tame for him. Plucky man, Geoff!' Bob suggested some East Indian beauty and all that sort of thing; might be, you had said 'good by' to the land of your forefathers forever. But now old man, we have you with us again. Welcome back! Tell you, I'm delighted!"

The serious gray eyes of Geoffry Thorne had reflected many lights during his friend's speech. At the mention of falling in love, they had saddened perceptibly, but had relighted as if with some sudden thought and turning to the other, he answered:

"No, Jack, it was not that. Fighting tigers is not half bad, and there are pretty girls all the world over, but to tell you the truth, three years is a long time to knock around and I've come to stay. The Etruria dropped anchor six hours ago and here I am tubbed, dressed and making for the club; pretty good time, eh?"

"Pretty good!" echoed Jack Lenox, absently. "By the way, Geoff, I was thinking instead of going to the club, suppose you take this card and drop into Trinity there; wedding going on—old friend, I believe, too—was going myself, but changed my mind. Good-by, old man! Meet you to-morrow at the Metropolitan!" and waving his hand, was off; saying to himself: "Odd thing, that—just happened to think—old flame of his, Marian Strong—wonder how he'll take it!"

Thorne glanced at the card carelessly. "Please present this at the church," stood irresolute a minute, and then turned toward the long line of carriages, saying: "Well, I might as well—can go to the club later and Jack says it is an old friend—wonder who?" and turning up his coat collar to the now icy wind, says softly to himself: "Three long years and now back again! Back to Marian!" How lovingly he dwells upon that name, dearer to him than all the world. "Marian! what will she say? Does she care? Who knows? Nothing but silence—all of my letters unanswered—nothing left me but this little ring that she took off her finger the night I said 'Good by!' and told me to trust her—and I have trusted. Can I wait until to-morrow, I wonder?"

His thoughts were brought to an abrupt close by the obnoxious umbrella coming in contact with an awning stretched from the doorway of the church to the street, under which he now passes and into the glare.

The bridal party are at the altar. From his seat near the door he hears the impressive Episcopal service being read, while the tender strain of de Koven's "O Promise Me" softly steals through the heavy perfumed air. Now the notes have changed to a more joyous tone: the triumphant song of Mendelssohn pealing forth from master fingers.

They have turned and are slowly passing down the aisle. Geoffrey begins to feel a bit bewildered. He says he cannot see distinctly, and yet, there is something strangely familiar—"Gad, this collar chokes me!" He turns nervously to loosen it.

They are nearing him. The bride seems pale; and is it not a forced smile rather than a natural one that lights the beautiful face? The look of bewilderment on Geoffrey's face has changed suddenly to one of horror and then to a misery that time will never heal. There is spreading over his face an ashy pallor that brings in prominence every line; determination, too, is written there.

"My God!" he mutters, "can it be Marian? Marian, darling, come back, come back!" he whispers feverishly and stretches out his arms.

Nothing but space answers him. The warden taps him on his shoulder. He looks hastily around and sees he is alone in the church. He steps out into the frosty air and looks around. Where is he? What has happened? Why is that heavy pain at his heart? and why does everything look so dreary? "Yes, yes," he sighs, "I remember it all." Then the look of determination comes back.

Hastily calling a cab, he jumps in and giving directions to the driver is soon among the long line of carriages drawn up in front of the handsome avenue home that he knows so well.

"I will see her! I will know from her own lips," he mutters as he alights and passes in among the guests. He reaches a quiet doorway where he can see and yet be unobserved. He takes a long breath. "Ah, how beautiful she is!" He sees the same clear cut features crowned by that same beautiful hair that he had once reverently touched; the pure white throat rises like chiseled marble from the gleam of her wedding gown. "Her wedding gown! The wife of another!" the thought maddens him. He cannot bear it. "Marian!" he groans and turns away. He will leave the house—it is only agony to stay—he will go away again—all is over—only memory left—that will never go! He reaches the door and then as if impelled by a will stronger than his own—enters the drawing-room.

She is receiving her congratulations with ease and grace always characteristic of Marian Strong, but today there is a restlessness, a tremor of excitement about her that she cannot conquer. Her eyes are nervously scanning the room; they look at every one who enters. She gives a sudden gasp. A look of terror spreads over her face and passing away, leaves her deathly white. Some one is approaching, and with a superhuman effort she controls herself.

"May I offer my congratulations, Mrs. Wyman?" a low, steady voice is saying, but she hears nothing. Faces around her have become indistinct. She thinks she hears music somewhere. Her hand is held out mechanically and touched. "Geoffrey, Geoffrey!" she cries faintly. It is stifling, and yet she is growing colder each minute.

"Such a surprise'!' the voice is saying in well modulated tones. "I only returned from India this morning—met Jack Lawrence on the street; he told me an old friend was being married at Trinity and gave me his card—Such a surprise!" he repeated. "Couldn't believe my own eyes—had to come to the house to be convinced. You have my best wishes, Mrs. Wyman. I should like to see you again, but I sail to-morrow for England. I had expected to remain in New York, but my plans have been changed," and with a forced smile of adieu, he passes on and out in the cooling night.

The room grows suddenly dark to Miriam. The light has gone from her life forever.

"Mrs. Wyman is ill; the strain has been too much for her!" is whispered around. As the guests leave the room, some one says: "Beastly custom, anyway, standing two hours. Poor girls! I wonder there are not more cases of nervous prostration after these wedding receptions."

As Geoffrey boards the Kron Prinz the next morning, a note is handed him. It is only a little cream, crested affair, and reads thus:

"They told me you were dead; that you had been killed in a fight with natives. My letters were returned. Father urged me to marry Mr. Wyman, and at last I yielded. Oh Geoffrey! why did you come back too late?"

* * *

Jack Lawrence hears the news of Geoffrey's departure next morning at the club and twirls his mustache thoughtfully as he says to himself: "By Jove! there must have been something in that old affair after all. Jack, it wasn't quite fair in you! Poor old Geoff!" then calls for a brandy and soda.

NEW DODGE OF THIEVES.

Shrewd Scheme to Mulct Bride of Wedding Presents.

Lecoq, the detective, waved the reporters back.

"Madame," he said to Mrs. Van Astorbilt, "take my advice and don't have a list of your daughter's wedding presents printed."

But, regarding the blaze of diamonds, the pale sheen of pearls and the glitter of massed gold and silver on the long table, Mrs. Van Astorbilt said regretfully, rebelliously:

"Oh, why not, Mr. Lecoq?"

"Madame, I'll tell you," said the great detective; and he began in thrilling accents, while the reporters listened with an air of incredulity and displeasure:

"Madame, there is a new dodge out in the profesh. A crook gets a list of the presents at a fashionable wedding, and then forges a letter—say from Mr. Brown, whose gift was a rock crystal ewer—and old Brown says in this here letter that he is sorry to see the bride got two other crystal ewers, and he wishes her to return his to him by bearer, and he'll send her a rope of pearls in its place.

"Of course the bride complies. She sends away the ewer, she waits for the pearls, and days, weeks, go by. The pearls don't arrive, but, for fear of hurting Brown's feelings, the bride says nothing to him about his strange remissness, and thus the thief has plenty of chance to get off.

"Carefully worked, this dodge is almost bound to succeed, and lists of valuable presents like these here should on that account never be made public."

BUILDING OF A WITICISM.

Point of Joke the Same Though Under Changed Conditions.

The Bohemian had an article entitled, "How a Joke Is Made." In it Marshall P. Wilder, the well known humorist, cites this story as an illustration of one method. "Here is a story with a joke in it about Labouchere, the genial editor of London Truth. When he was standing for the borough of Northampton for the English parliament a little girl came up to her father and said: 'Papa, who made Mr. Labouchere?' 'Why, Providence, my dear,' answered the somewhat astonished parent. 'And what for, papa?' inquires the child. Now that isn't a bad joke. It was natural, anyway. But listen to one of mine, which really has the same point, though it is brought out in a different way. A child and her mother are on the cars. Opposite them sits a young man dressed in the height of fashion. Says the child: 'Mamma, what is that?' and, as she asks the question, she points to the young man opposite. 'Hush, my dear,' answers the mother. 'But, mother, I want to know.' To quiet the child the mother whispers in her ear: 'He is what we call a dude, dear.' The child persists as usual in gaining some more information. 'And who made him, mamma?' 'Why, Providence, dear, of course,' replies the mother sotto voice, whereat the child exclaims: 'Oh, mother, doesn't Providence like to have fun sometimes?' You see, the stories are really alike. At all events, the point is the same."

GIRL KILLED A HAWK.

Bird Had Attacked Her When Driven From Pigeons.

A large hen hawk, weighing nearly fourteen pounds, attacked Miss Eloise M. Shields, 18, of Milton, Mass., while the young woman, accompanied by some friends, was spending the afternoon at the Blue Hills reservation. The party had just had their luncheon and were feeding some pigeons when the hawk swooped down and started to carry off one of the pigeons in its talons. Miss Shields quickly picked up a stone, and throwing it at the bird made it drop its prey. The hawk then attacked the girl and nestling on one of her shoulders started to beat her with its wing. After knocking off the bird with her hands Miss Shields picked up one of the tonic bottles, which the party had been using, and hitting the hawk a hard blow on its head, killed it. Except for a few scratches the young woman was not injured.

Hurry.

To our own age belongs the credit of having raised hurry from the degraded position of a disease to that of a commercial process. Formerly hurry simply brought people to an early grave, with nothing to show for it, whereas now it is become the means of transforming peace of mind, which is a solecism, to say the best of it, into ready money. Hurry has grown to be a great fact in life. Even the fashions take account of it, until women are found doing up their hair in such a way that they may go the speed limit without fear of its coming down. And the best of hurry is that it is its own sufficient justification. Nobody expects hurry to have any particular reason behind it any more.—Life.

Making Use of a Friend.

A Harlem (N. Y.) resident after a busy day was seated restfully at home when the telephone bell rang, says a New York letter. "Meet me at the Waldorf within an hour," called an intimate friend at the other end of the wire; "must see you. Don't fail. Within an hour." Important. Good-by." The Harlemite grumbled, wondered why business should follow a tired man into his home, got into his boots, kissed his wife and hustled for the hotel. His friend was waiting for him in the Waldorf cafe. "Well, Jim," he said, "what is it? What's up?" "What's up?" echoed Jim. "Why, I'm as lonely as a castaway to-night. Want company—some one to talk with. What will you drink?" Jim is a bachelor.

Each His Work.

If you cannot preach, then pray. If you cannot go, then give so that others may go. If you cannot sing, then sympathize. But in any event do not forget that Christ assigns by natural endowments to "each man his work."—Rev. M. E. Harlan, Disciple, Brooklyn, N. Y.

The Jewel of Forgiveness.

Nothing is more moving to man than the spectacle of reconciliation; our weaknesses are thus indemnified and are not too costly, being the price we pay for the hour of forgiveness; and the archangel who has never felt anger has reason to envy the man who subdues it. When thou forgivest, the man who has pierced thy heart stands to thee in the relation of the sea-worm that perforates the shell of the mussel, which straightway closes the wound with a pearl.—Richter.